¶ A Supplicacyon for the Beggers.

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(By Simon Fyshe)

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ſouereygne lorde.

MOſt lamentably compleyneth theyre wofull myſery vnto youre highnes youre poore daily bedemẽ the wretched hidous monſtres (on whome ſcarcely for horror any yie dare loke) the foule vnhappy ſorte of lepres, and other ſore people, nedy, impotent, blinde, lame, and ſike, that live onely by almeſſe, howe that theyre nombre is daily ſo ſore encreaſed that all the almeſſe of all the weldiſpoſed people of this youre realme is not halfe ynough for to ſuſteine theim, but that for verey conſtreint they die for hunger. And this moſt peſtilent miſchief is comen vppon youre ſaide poore beedmẽ by the reaſon that there is yn the tymes of youre noble predeceſſours paſſed craftily crept ynto this your realme an other ſort (not of impotent but) of ſtrong puiſſaunt and counterfeit holy, and ydell beggers and vacabundes whiche ſyns the tyme of theyre firſt entre by all the craft and wilineſſe of Satan are noxe encreaſed vnder your ſight not onely into a great nõbre, but alſo ynto a kingdome. Theſe are (not the herdes, but the rauinous wolues going in herdes clothing deuouring the flocke) the Biſſhoppes, Abbottes, Priours, Deacons, Archedeacons, Suffraganes, Preſtes, Monkes Chanons, Freres, Pardoners and Sommers. And who is abill to nõbre this idell rauinous ſort whiche (ſetting all laboure aſide) haue begged ſo importunatly that they haue gotten ynto theyre hondes more then the therd part of all youre Realme. The goodlieſt lordſhippes, maners, londes, and territories, are

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theyrs. Beſides this they haue the tenth part af all the corne, medowe, paſture, graſſe, wolle, coltes, calues, lambes, pigges, geſe, and chikens. Ouer and biſides the tenth part of euery ſeruauntes wages the tenth part of the wolle, milke, hony, waxe cheſe, and butter. Ye and they loke ſo narowly vppon theyre prouffittes that the poore wyues muſt be countable to theym of euery tenth eg or elles ſhe gettith not her ryghtes at eſter ſhalbe taken as an heretike. hereto haue they theire foure of ferting daies. whate money pull they yn by probates of teſtamentes, priuy tithes, and by mennes offeringes to theyre pilgremages, and at theyre firſt maſſes? Euery man and childe that is burled muſt pay ſumwhat for maſſes and diriges to be ſong for him or elles they will accuſe the dedes frendes and executours of hereſie. whate money get they by mortuaries, by hearing of confeſſions (and yet they wil kepe therof no counceyle) by halowing of churches altares ſuperaltares chapelles and belles, by curſing of men and abſoluing them agein for money? what a multitude of money gather the pardoners in a yere? Howe moche money get the Sommers by extorcion yn ayere, by aſſityng the people to the commiſſaries court and afterward releaſing thapparaūce for money? Finally, the infinite nombre of begging freres whate get they yn a yere? Here if it pleaſe your grace to marke ye ſhall ſe a thing farre out of ioynt. There are withyn youre realme of England. liij. thouſand pariſſhe churches. And this ſtonding that there be but tenne houſhouldes yn euery pariſſhe yet are there fiue hundreth thouſand and twenty thouſand houſhouldes. And of euery of theſe houſhouldes hath euery of the fiue ordres of freres a peny a quarter for euery ordre, that is for all the fiue ordres fiue pens a quarter for every houſe. That is for all

the fiue ordres. xx. d, a yere of euery house. Summa fiue hundreth thousand and twenty thousand quarters of angels. That is. cclx. thousand half angels. Summa. cxxx. thousand angels. Summa totalis. xliij. thousand poundes and. cccxxxiij. li. vi. s. viij. d. sterling. wherof not foure hundreth yeres passed they had not one peny. Oh greuous and peynfull exactiōs thus yerely to be paied. from the whiche the people of your nōbill predecessours the kinges of the auncīēt Britōs euer stode fre And this wil they haue or els they wil ꝓcure him that will not giue it theim to be takē as an heretike. whate tiraunt euer oppressed the people like this cruell and vengeable generacion? whate subiectes shall be abill to helpe theire prince that be after this facion yerely polled? whate good christien people can be abill to socoure vs pore lepres blinde sore, and lame, that be thus yerely oppressed? Is it any merueille that youre people so compleine of pouertie? Is it any merueile that the taxes fiftenes and subsidies that your grace most tenderly of great cōpassion hath taken emong your people to defend theim from the thretened ruine of theire comon welth haue bin so sloughtfully, ye painfully leuied? Seing that almost the vtmost peny that mought haue bin leuied hath ben gathered bifore yerely by this rauinous cruell and insatiabill generacion The danes nether the saxons yn the time of the auncient Britons shulde neuer haue ben abill to hāue brought theire armies from so farre hither ynto your lond to haue conquered it if they had had at that time suche a sort of idell glotens to finde at home. The nobill king Arthur had neuer ben abill to haue caried his armie to the fote of the mountaines to resist the comming downe of lucius the Emperoure if suche yerely exactions had ben taken of his people. The grekes had neuer ben

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abill to haue ſo long cõtinued at the ſiege of Troie if they had had at home ſuche an idell ſort of cormorauntes to finde. The auncient Romains had neuer ben abil to haue put all the hole worlde vnder theyre obeiſaunce if theyre people had byn thus yerely oppreſſed. The Turke nowe yn youre tyme ſhulde neuer be abill to get ſo moche grounde of criſtendome if he had yn his empire ſuche a ſort of locuſtes to deuoure his ſubſtaunce. Ley then theſe ſommes to the forſeid therd part of the poſſeſſions of the realme that ye may ſe whether it drawe nighe vnto the half of the hole ſubſtaunce of the realme or not, So ſhall ye finde that it draweth ferre aboue. Nowe let vs then compare the nombre of this vnkind idell ſort vnto the nombre of the laye people and we ſhall ſe whether it be indifferently ſhifted or not that they ſhuld haue half. Compare theim to the nombre of men, ſo are they not the. C. perſon. Compare theim to men wimen and children, then are they not the. CCCC. parſon yn nombre. One part therfore yn foure hundreth partes deuided were to moche for theim except they did laboure. whate an vnequal burthen is it that they haue half with the multitude and are not the. CCCC. parſon of theire nombre? whate tongue is abill to tell that euer there was eny comon welth ſo ſore oppreſſed ſins the worlde firſt began?

¶ And whate do al theſe gredy ſort of ſturdy idell holy theues with theſe yerely exactions that they take of the people? Truely nothing but exempt theim ſilues from thobedience of your grace. Nothing but tranſlate all rule power lordiſhippe auctorite obedience and dignite from your grace vnto theim. Nothing but that all your ſubiectes ſhulde fall vnto diſobedience and rebellion ageinſt your grace and be vnder

theym. As they did vnto your nobill predeceſſour king Iohn: whiche forbicauſe that he wolde haue puniſſhed certeyn trayтours that had conſpired with the frenche king to haue depoſed him frō his crowne and dignite (emong the whiche a clerke called Stephen whome afterward ageinſt the kinges will the Pope made Biſſhoppe of Caunterbury was one) enterditeted his Lond. For the whiche mater your moſt nobill realme wrongfully (alas for ſhame) hath ſtōd tributary (not vnto any kind temporall prince, but vnto a cruell deueliſſhe bloudſupper dronkē in the bloude of the ſayntes and marters of chriſt) euerſins. Here were an holy ſort of prelates that thus cruelly coude puniſſhe ſuche a rightuous kinge, all his realme, ād ſucceſſion for doing right.

¶ Here were a charitable ſort of holy men that coude thus enterdite an hole realme, and plucke awey the obediēce of the people from theyre naturall liege lorde and kinge, for none other cauſe but for his rightuouſneſſe. Here were a bliſſed ſort not of meke herdes but of bloudſuppers that coude ſet the frenche king vppon ſuche a rightuous prince to cauſe hym to loſe his crowne and dignite to make effuſion of the bloude of his people, oneles this good and bliſſed king of greate compaſſion, more fearing and lamenting the ſheding of the bloude of his people then the loſſe of his crowne and dignite agaynſt all right and conſcience had ſubmitted him ſilf vnto theym. O caſe moſt horrible that euer ſo nobill a king Realme, and ſucceſſion ſhulde thus be made to ſtoupe to ſuche a ſort of bloudſuppers. where was his ſwerde, power, crowne, and dignite become wherby he mought haue done iuſtice yn this maner? where was their obediēce become that ſhuld haue byn ſubiect vnder his highe power yn this mater? Ye where

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was the obedience of all his ſubiectes become that for maintenaunce of the comon welth ſhulde haue holpen him manfully to haue reſiſted theſe bloudſuppers to the ſhedinge of theyre bloude? was not all to gither by theyre polycy tranſlated frō this good king vnto theim. Ye and what do they more? Truely nothing but applie theym ſilues by all the ſleyghtes they may to haue to do with euery mannes wife, euery mānes doughter and euery mannes mayde that cukkoldrie and baudrie ſhulde reigne ouer all emong your ſubiectes, that nomā ſhulde knowe his owne childe that theyre baſtardes might enherite the poſſeſſions of euery man to put the right begotten children clere beſide theire inheritaunce yn ſubuerſion of all eſtates and godly ordre. Theſe be they that by theire abſteyning from mariage do let the generation of the people wher by all the realme at length if it ſhulde be continued ſhall be made deſert and inhabitable.

¶ Theſe be they that haue made an hundreth thouſand ydell hores yn your realme whiche wolde haue gotten theyre lyuing honeſtly, yn the ſwete of theyre faces had not theyre ſuperfluous rycheſſe illected theym to vnclene luſt and ydelneſſe. Theſe be they that corrupt the hole generation of mā kind yn your realme, that catche the pokkes of one woman. and bere theym to an other, that be brent wyth one woman, and bere it to an other, that catche the lepry of one woman, and bere it to an other, ye ſome one of theym ſhall boſt emong his felawes that he hath medled with an hundreth wymen. Theſe be they that when they haue ones drawē mennes wiues to ſuche incontinēcy ſpende awey theire huſbondes goodes make the wimen to runne awey from theire huſbondes, ye, rynne awey them ſilues both with wiſ ād goodes, bring

both man wife and children to ydelnesse theft and beggeri.
Ye who is abill to nombre the greate and brode botomles occean see full of euilles that this mischeuous and sinful generacion may laufully bring vppon vs vnponißhed. where is youre swerde, power, crowne, and dignite, become that shuld punisshe (by punisshement of deth euen as other men are punisshed) the felonies, rapes, murdres, and treasons cōmitted by this sinfull generaciō? where is theire obedience become that shulde be vnder your hyghe power yn this mater? ys not all to gither translated and exempt frō your grace vnto theim? yes truely. whate an infinite nombre of people might haue bē encreased to haue peopled the realme if these sort of folke had bē maried like other men. whate breche of matrimonie is there brought yn by theim? suche truely as was neuer sins the worlde began emong the hole multitude of the hethen.
¶ who is she that wil set her hondes to worke to get. iij. d. a day and may haue at lest. xx. d. a day to slepe an houre with a frere, a monke, or a prest? what is he that wolde laboure for a grote a day and may haue at lest. xij. d. a day to be baude to a prest, a monke, or a frere? whate a sort are there of theime that mari prestes souereigne ladies but to cloke the prestes yncontinency and that they may haue a liuing of the prest theime silues for theire laboure? Howe many thousandes doth suche lubricite bring to beggery theft and idelnesse whiche shuld haue kept theire good name and haue set theim silues to worke had not ben this excesse treasure of the spiritualtie?? whate honest man dare take any man or woman yn his seruice that hath bē at suche a scole with a spiritual mā? Oh the greuous shipwrak of the comon welth, whiche yn aunciēt time bifore the coming yn of these rauinous wolues

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was ſo proſperous: that then there were but fewe theues: ye theft was at that tyme ſo rare that Ceſar was not cõpellid to make penalite of deth vppon felony as your grace may well perceyue yn his inſtitutes. There was alſo at that tyme but fewe pore people and yet they did not begge but there was giuẽ theim ynough vnaxed, for there was at that time none of theſe rauinous wolues to axe it from theim as it apperith yn the actes of thappoſtles. Is it any merueill though there be nowe ſo many beggers, theues, and ydell people? Nay truely.

¶ whate remedy: make lawes ageynſt theim. I am yn doubt whether ye be able: Are they not ſtronger in your owne parliament houſe then your ſilfe? whate a nombre of Biſſhopes' abbotes' and priours are lordes of your parliament? are not all the lerned men in your realme in fee with theim to ſpeake yn your parliament houſe for theim ageinſt your crowne' dignite' and comon welth of your realme a fewe of youre owne lerned counſell onely excepted? whate lawe can be made ageinſt theim that may be aduaylable? who is he (though he be greued never ſo ſore) for the murdre of his anuceſtre rauiſſhement of his wyfe, of his doughter, robbery, treſpas, maiheme, dette, or eny other offence dare ley it to theyre charge by any wey of accion, and if he do then is he by and by by theyre wilyneſſe accuſed of hereſie. ye they will ſo handle him or he paſſe that except he will bere a fagot for theyre pleaſure he ſhal be excommunicate and then be all his accions daſſhed. So capetyue are your lawes vnto theym that no man that they lyſt to excõmunicat may be admitted to ſue any accion in any of your courtes. If eny mã yn your ſeſſions dare be ſo hardy to endyte a preſt of eny ſuche cryme he hath or the yere go out ſuche a yoke of hereſye leyd in his necke that it maketh him wiſſhe

that he had not done it. Your grace may ſe whate a worke there is in London, howe the biſshoppe rageth for endyting of certayn curates of extorcion and incontinency the laſt yere in the warmoll queſt. Had not Richard hunne commenced accyon of premunire ageinſt a preſt he had bin yet a lyue and none eretik a tall but an honeſt man.

¶ Dyd not dyuers of your noble progenitours ſeynge theyre crowne and dignite runne ynto ruyne and to be thus craſtely tranſlated ynto the hondes of this myſcheuous generacyon make dyuers ſtatutes for the reformacyon therof, emong whiche the ſtatute of mortmayne was one? to theintent that after that tyme they ſhulde haue no more gyuen vnto theim. But whate avayled it? haue they not gotten ynto theyre hondes more londes ſins then eny duke yn ynglond hath, the ſtatute notwithſtonding? Ye haue they not for all that tranſlated ynto theyre hondes from your grace half your kyngdome thoroughly? The hole name as reaſon is for the auncientie of your kyngdome whiche was bifore theyrs and out of the whiche theyrs is growen onely abiding with your grace? and of one kyngdome made tweyne: the ſpirituall kyngdome (as they call it) for they wyll be named firſt, And your temporall kingdome, And whiche of theſe, ij. kingdomes ſuppoſe ye is like to ouergrowe the other? ye to put the other clere out of memory? Truely the kingdome of the bloudſuppers for to theym is giuen daily out of your kingdome. And that that is ones gyuen theim comith neuer from theim agein. Suche lawes haue they that none of theim may nether gyue nor ſell nothing. whate lawe can be made ſo ſtronge ageinſt theim that they other with money or elles with other policy will not breake and ſet at nought? whate kingdome can endure that euer gy-

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with thus from him and receyueth nothing agein? O howe all the substaūce of your Realme forthwith your swerde, power, crowne, dignite, and obedience of your people, rynneth hedlong ynto the insaciabill whyrlepole of these gredi goulafres to be swalowed and devoured.

¶ Nether haue they eny other coloure to gather these yerely exaccions ynto theyre hondes but that they sey they pray for vs to God to delyuer our soules out of the paynes of purgatori without whose prayer they sey or at lest without the popes pardon we coude neuer be deliuered thens whiche if it ee true then is it good reason that we gyue theim all these thinges all were it C times as moche, But there be many men of greate litterature and iudgement that for the love they haue vnto the trouth and vnto the comen welth haue not feared to put theim silf ynto the greatest infamie that may be, in abtection of all the world, ye yn perill of deth to declare theyre oppinion in this mather whiche is that there is no purgatory but that it is a thing inuented by the couitousnesse of the spiritualtie onely to translate all kingdomes from other princes vnto theim and that there is not one word spoken of hit in al holy scripture. They sey also that if there were a purgatory And also if that the pope with his pardons for money may deliuer one soule thēs: he may deliuer him aswel without money if he may deliuer one, he may deliuer a thousand: yf he may deliuer a thousand he may deliuer theim all, ād so destroy purgatory. And then is he a cruell tyraunt without all charite if he kepe theim there in pryson and in paine till men will giue him money. ¶ Lyke wyse saie they of all the hole sort of the spirituelte that if they will not pray for no mā but for theim that gyue theim money they are tyrauntes ād lakke charite,

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and ſuffer thoſe ſoules to be punisſhed ād payned vncheritably for lacke of theyre prayers. Theſe ſort of folkes they call heretikes, theſe they burne, theſe they rage ageinſt, put to opē ſhame and make theim bere fagottes. But whether they be heretikes or no, well I wote that this purgatory and the Popes pardons is all the cauſe of tranſlaciō of yeur kingdome ſo faſt into their hondes wherfore it is manifeſt it can not be of chriſt, for he gaue more to the temporall kingdome, he hym ſilfe paid tribute to Ceſar he toke nothing frō hym but taught that the highe powers ſhuld be alweys obeid ye he him ſilf (although he were moſt fre lorde of all and innocent) was obedient vnto the highe powers vnto deth. This is the great ſcabbe why they will not let the newe teſtament go a brode yn your moder tong leſt men ſhulde eſpie that they by theyre cloked ypochriſi do tranſlate thus faſt your kingdome into theyre hō des, that they are not obedient vnto your highe power, that they are cruell, vnclene, vnmerciful, and ypocbrites, that thei ſeke not the honour of Chriſt but their owne, that remiſſion of ſinnes are not giuen by the popes pardon, but by Chriſt, for the ſure feith and truſt that we hane in him. Here may your grace well perceyue that except ye ſuffer theyre ypocriſie to be diſcloſed all is like to runne ynto theire hondes and as long as it is couered ſo long ſhall it ſeme to euery mā to be a greate ympiete not to gyue theim. For this I am ſure your grace thinketh (as the truth is) I am as good a man as my father, whye may I not aſwell gyue theim as moche as my father did. And of this mynd I am ſure are all the loordes knightes ſquire gentilmen and yemen in englond, ye and vntill it be diſcloſed all your peoole will thinke that your ſtatute of mortmayne was never made with no good conſcience ſeing that it taketh a

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wey the liberte of your people in that they may not as laufully by theire foules out of purgatory by gyuing to the ſpiritualte as their predeceſſours did in tymes paſſed.

¶ wherfore if ye will eſcheuwe the ruyne of your crowne and dignite let theire ypocriſye be vttered and that ſhalbe more ſtedfull in this mater then all the lawes that may be made be they never ſo ſtronge. For to make a lawe for to puniſſhe eny offender except it were more for to giue other men an enſample to beware to committe ſuche like offence, whate ſhuld yt avayle. Did not doctour Alyn moſt preſumptuouſly nowe yn your tyme ageynſt all his allegiaunce all that ever he coude to pull from you the knowlege of ſuche plees as long vnto your hygbe courtes vnto an other court in derogacion of your crowne and dignite? Did not alſo doctor Horſey and his compliſces moſt heynouſly as all the world knoweth murdre in pryſon that honeſt marchaunt Richard hunne? For that he ſued your writ of premunire againſt a preſt that wrougfully held him in ple in a ſpirituall court for a mater wherof the knowlege belonged vnto your hyghe courtes. And whate puniſſhement was there done that eny man may take example of to beware of lyke offence? truely none but that the one payd fiue hundreth poundes (as it is ſaid to the bildinge of your ſterre chamber) and when that payment was ones paſſed the capteyns of his kingdome (bicauſe he faught ſo manfully ageynſt your crowne and dignite) haue heped to him benefice vpon benefice ſo that he is rewarded tenne tymes as moche. The other as it is ſeid payde ſixe hundreth poundes for him and his complices whiche forbicauſe that he had lyke wiſe faught ſo manfully ageynſt your crowne and dignite was ymmediatly (as he had opteyned your moſt gracyous pardon) promoted by the

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capiteynes of his kingdome with benefice vpon benefice to the value of.iiij.tymes as moche. who can take example of this punisshement to be ware of suche like offence? who is he of theyre kingdome that will not rather take courage to cō-mitte lyke offence seyng the promocions that fill to this men for theyre so offending. So weke and blunt is your swerde to strike at one of the offenders of this croked and peruers generacyon.

¶ And this is by the reason that the chief instrument of your lawe ye the chief of your counsell and he whiche hath youre swerde in his hond to whome also all the other instrumentes are obedient is alweys a spirituell man whiche hath euer suche an inordinate loue vnto his owne kingdome that he will mainteyn that, though all the temporall kingdoms and comō welth of the worlde shulde therfore vtterly be vndone, Here leue we out the greteſt mater of all left that we declaring suche an horrible carayn of euyll ageinst the ministres of iniquite shulde seme to declare the one onely faute or rather the ignoraunce of oure best beloued ministre of rightousneſſe whiche is to be hid till he may be lerned by these small enormitees that we haue spoken of to kuowe it pleynly him silf. But whate remedy to releue vs your poore sike lame and sore bedemen? To make many hospitals for the relief of the poore people? Nay truely. The moo the worse, for euer the fatte of the hole foundacion hangeth on the prestes berdes. Dyuers of your noble predecessours kinges of this realme haue gyuen londes to monasteries to giue a certein somme of money yerely to the poore people wherof for the aunciente of the tyme they giue neuer one peny, They haue lyke wise giuen to thē to haue a certeyn masses said daily for theim wherof they

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ſey neuer one. If the Abbot of weſtminſter ſhulde ſing euery day as many maſſes for his founders as he is bounde to do by his foundacion. M, monkes were to fewe. wherfore if your grace will bilde a ſure hoſpitall that neuer ſhall faile to relee ue vs all your poore bedemē, ſo take from theim all theſe thynges. Set theſe ſturdy lobies a brode in the world to get theim wiues of theire owne, to get theire liuing with their laboure in the ſwete of theire faces according to the commaundement of god. Gene. iij. to gyue other idell people by theire example occaſion to go to laboure. Tye theſe holy idell theues to the cartes to be whipped naked about euery market towne til they will fall to laboure that they by theyre īportunate begging take not awey the almeſſe that the good chriſten people wolde giue vnto vs ſore impotent miſerable people your bedemen. Then ſhall aſwell the nombre of oure forſaid monſtruous ſort as of the baudes, hores theues, and idell people decreace. Then ſhall theſe great yerely exaccions ceaſe. Then ſhall not youre ſwerde, power, crowne, dignite, and obedience of your people, be tranſlated from you. Then ſhall you haue full obedience of your people. Then ſhall the idell people be ſet to worke. Then ſhall matrimony be moche better kept. Then ſhal the generation of your people be encreaſed, Then ſhall your comons encreaſe in richeſſe. Then ſhall the goſpell be preached. Then ſhall none begge oure almeſſe from vs. Then ſhal we haue ynough and more then ſhall ſuffice vs, whiche ſhall be the beſt hoſpitall that euer was founded for vs, Then ſhall we daily pray to god for your moſt noble eſtate lōg to endure.

Domine ſaluum fac regem.